



Descent to the caves

Well, if it's trash, why put it on show? Many people are bound to ask this question when they see the poster for an exhibition entitled *Trash Culture*. The definitions of culture are infinite and those who use the word in a highly restrictive sense, reducing it to excellence and creative virtue, are unlikely to receive a satisfactory reply. However, regardless of its quality, culture also comprises the markers and motifs which dot the familiar landscape of us all. And signs and manifestations often appear on this landscape—painting, entertainments, music, image—which, by using error and sloppiness as their basis—in other words, voluntary anti-excellence—end up becoming elements of cultural significance through the social mechanisms which the exhibition seeks to explain or make manifest. In the main, trash culture is a culture in spite of itself, an avant-garde which never sought to be one. However, it inhabits many spaces of our everyday lives, without us always noticing its presence.

Seen today, one might think that trash culture is a form taken by popular culture as it emerges from modernity, as it enters a post-heroic and post-identitary phase of the human adventure. However, in reality, the characteristic game of trash culture, the fascination with error, with monstrosity, with ugliness, with neglect, with a seemingly well-crafted incompetence, is the result of a far-off mechanism which extols the spectator, who receives the reward of feeling more gifted, more normal, more beautiful, more refined and more efficient than the artist. The novel aspect lies in the fact that what had always circulated on the fringes of modernity, gains centrality—after mutating into new forms suited to a culture which is much more audiovisual—at a time when we are emerging from modernity. And it adds confusion to the direction of the path we have taken, if we have, in fact, taken one.

Error as a cultural strategy is the argument. A successful way of creating cultural products which have an unforeseeable impact. When we mention trash culture everybody looks to the TV. It is true that it has been an effective way of channelling these products which are based on the normalisation of the object, on the humiliation of characters and the exhibition of monstrosities. The programme *Crónicas Marcianas* is such a perfect example of trash culture that it is on the boundaries of trash, on the verge of ceasing to be considered as such. But there are many other fields in which monstrosity—fairground attractions, for instance—debasement—drawings and paintings of serial killers—and humiliation—the ridiculous—acquire a cultural nature. To some extent, they perform a subversive function as if, by a process of sedimentation of the error and the sinister, they showed up the system itself. It is in this way that trash culture can become an occasional avant-garde.

This exhibition seeks to trace the double game which alienates the spectator in trash and acts as a window onto the misfortunes of the social. Like a pothole of taste: in other words, a descent to the caves of post-contemporary culture.